

**At a meeting of the CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in COMMITTEE ROOM NO. 1, CIVIC CENTRE, SUNDERLAND on THURSDAY, 8<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER, 2011 at 5.30 pm.**

**Present:-**

Councillor Stewart in the Chair

Councillors Bell, Bonallie, MacKnight, T. Martin, Oliver, D. Richardson, Scanlan, D. Smith and Williams together with Ms. R. Elliott and Mr. K. Morris

**Also in Attendance:-**

Councillor P. Smith – Portfolio Holder for Children and Learning City  
Councillor Tate - Chairman of Management Scrutiny Committee

**Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillor Morrissey and on behalf of Ms. S. Duncan, Mr. M. Frank and Ms. C. Hutchinson

**Minutes of the Last Meeting of the Children, Young People and Learning Scrutiny Committee held on 21<sup>st</sup> July, 2011**

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Children, Young People and Learning Scrutiny Committee held on 21<sup>st</sup> July, 2011 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

**Declarations of Interest**

Response from Cabinet – 22<sup>nd</sup> June, 2011 – Policy Review – Learning at Work

Councillor Martin declared a personal interest in the item as a retired member of the National Union of Teachers.

**Reference from Cabinet – 22<sup>nd</sup> June, 2011 – Policy Review – Learning at Work**

The Executive Director of Children's Services and the Portfolio Holder for Children and Learning City submitted a joint report (copy circulated) which provided feedback

from the Cabinet meeting held on 22 June, 2011 which considered the Committee's policy report into Learning at Work.

(for copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor P. Smith, Portfolio Holder for Children and Learning City, presented the report thanking Members for the opportunity to attend the meeting to provide feedback from the meeting of Cabinet and advised that Cabinet had approved the Committee's recommendations in their entirety. She went on to provide progress updates on the work underway to move forward on the Committee's recommendations as set out in the action plan.

Councillor Oliver sought further information on the feasibility study into incorporating contractual clauses into inward investors contracts specifying requirements for recruitment of local NEET individuals and was advised that this was an area of complexity, with a number of challenges to be addressed to provide an equal access to job opportunities. Mr. Moore, Executive Director of Children's Services advised that he understood some Local Authorities had found a way through the complexities involved but the procedure had to be lawful and could be tricky to get right.

In response to a comment from Councillor Oliver regarding the removal of the EMA and the issue that students had with expensive public transport, Councillor P. Smith advised that there had been a lot of work undertaken in relation to this and she was aware that there had been special offers for cheaper public transport for students but it still could be quite expensive for young people.

Councillor Williams referred to the Washington Area Committee having allocated SIB funding towards a call for projects to provide support and co-ordination to NEETs and commented that so far the applications that were being submitted were from the usual partner organisations that got involved and therefore those hard to reach young people may be becoming more isolated. Mr. Moore advised that they had done a lot of positive work with the likes of Gentoo, Connexions and other partner agencies in targeting young people with a variety of complex issues. He also advised that the service were working with local schools to identify young people earlier in their school years to try and use a preventative approach to dealing with their issues. He explained it was a struggle and a real challenge but the service would continue to look at different ways of engaging with young people.

Councillor Martin raised concerns over any Free Schools which could be set up in the city as they would have overall responsibility for employing teaching staff and the local authority would not have the control over these in ensuring staff were adequately trained and qualified. Councillor P. Smith shared the Member's concerns but unfortunately where Free Schools were set up then the local authority could have little, if anything, to do with how they are arranged.

Councillor Stewart referred to recommendation (i) and in particular seeking to have employer representation on the 14-19 NEET Improvement Board to tackle issues relating to apprenticeships in the city. He noted that a representative from Gentoo had been invited to attend the Board but commented that the Committee had had a representative from a private firm, such as Nissan, in mind rather than a

representative from another public sector body. Mr. Moore commented that he would be keen to endorse this and would follow it up, reporting back to the Committee with his findings.

The Cabinet Member having left the meeting, it was:-

2. RESOLVED that the proposed actions detailed within the Action Plan be received and noted.

### **Policy Development and Review 2011/12 : Approach to the Review and Setting the Scene**

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which set out to establish background information, set the scene and set out an approach to undertaking the review into early intervention and locality services.

(for copy report – see original minutes).

Mr. Nigel Cummings, Scrutiny Officer presented the report which outlined the way in which it was intended to carry out the Committee's policy review for the year, proposed to be entitled, 'As Soon As Possible : Early Intervention and Locality Services in Sunderland', and provided some scene setting background information for Members. He also drew Members attention to the proposed timetable for the review which was attached as appendix 2 to the report.

The Chairman asked that any dates of extraordinary meetings of the Committee, informal meetings or visits be circulated to Members as soon as possible to allow them time to organise their diaries to be able to attend.

Mr. Moore suggested the Committee consider potentially including the Professor Munro Report and the recent response to it as part of the review, as there was a lot of content around early intervention and safeguarding, with two specific recommendations being set out within it.

Mr. Cummings also advised that running alongside the policy review were two working groups based around Teenage Pregnancy and the Corporate Parent. Although the working groups would be separate to the main review their findings would ultimately feed into the process near the end.

Councillor Stewart asked any Members to let either himself or the Scrutiny Officer know if they were interested in joining the working groups and again dates would be circulated in due course.

In response to a query from Councillor Martin asking if each child in the city was still issued with a unique reference number that would stay with them and be used to identify them, Councillor Stewart asked that this be checked and the answer fed back to Members.

- a. RESOLVED that:-
- (i) The title of the review be agreed as 'As Soon As Possible : Early Intervention and Locality Services in Sunderland'; and
  - (ii) The proposed timetable for the policy review be agreed.

### **Policy Review – Monitoring of Recommendations**

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided the Committee with progress in relation to the Alcohol and Young People and the Transfer of the 16-19 Learning Provision Policy Review recommendations.

(for copy report – see original minutes).

Mr. Cummings presented the report advising that following Cabinet consideration of the Committee's recommendations from the Alcohol and Young People Policy Review and the Transfer of the 16-19 Learning Provision Policy Review, they had agreed that progress towards the completion of the actions would be monitored through the Action Plan, with standardised six monthly monitoring reports, which this was one of.

Mr. Cummings explained that the policy review on Alcohol and Young People Policy Review was 88% complete with only one recommendation to be completed, hopefully by the next reporting cycle.

He went on to explain that it was slightly different with the Policy Review into the transfer of the 16-19 Learning Provision as a number of the recommendations were no longer deliverable due to the change in Government policy brought about following the General Election. However, he could confirm that there was still only one recommendation that was outstanding and proposed that it was now superseded by the Learning at Work Policy Review and a number of recommendations that had arose from it.

He asked the Committee to consider signing off that recommendation by referencing the recommendations that superseded it and in effect sign off the Transfer of 16-19 Learning Provision Policy review completely, and it was:-

4. RESOLVED that the progress towards the completion of the action detailed within the Action Plan be received and noted.

### **Provisional Sunderland National Curriculum Results for 2011**

The Executive Director of Children's Services submitted a report (copy circulated) with an early update on the performance of pupils in statutory Key Stage assessments and Early Years Foundation Stage Profile.

(for copy report – see original minutes).

Mr. Mike Foster, Deputy Executive Director Children's Services, presented the report advising Members of the current position and key aspects within each of the Key Stages. He informed the Committee that all Key Stage results were currently provisional and subject to change until the final results were made available later in the autumn term.

Members were impressed with the provisional results and congratulated the work of the schools, staffing and pupils in achieving some of the best results at each key stage that the Committee had seen. They applauded the support and work that had been undertaken and agreed that this could only be achieved through the hard work of the school, teachers and the local authority and ultimately that of the pupils and parents themselves. They asked the Scrutiny Officer to prepare a press release on behalf of the Committee.

In response to the Chairman's question around Looked After Children's results, Mr. Foster advised that they would not know until the final results were issued and that he would provide the information at that point.

With regards to how the authority were performing nationally, Mr. Foster advised that generally they were above the national average and that this year early indications showed that they were well above the national average for pupils achieving 5+ A\*-C.

The Chairman having thanked Mr. Foster for his report, it was:-

5. RESOLVED that the content of the report be received and noted.

#### **Performance Report Quarter 4 (April 2010 – March 2011)**

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided Members with a performance update against the former national indicators relating to the period April 2010 to March 2011.

(for copy report – see original minutes).

Ms. Beverley Scanlon, Head of Commissioning and Change Management and Ms. Kelly Davison-Pullan, Lead Officer for Corporate Performance, presented the report advising that in October 2010 the Government announced that from April 2011 there would no longer be a requirement for Council's to produce an LAA. They also announced the demise of the National indicator set and as a consequence the performance framework is being reviewed. A new framework is being developed that focuses on local priorities and will form the basis of future performance reporting to the Committee.

Ms. Elliott sought further information around the Triage and Youth Custody Support Scheme and was advised that it was a system put in place offering an alternative way to deal with young people on their first entry into the justice system other than through court. Ms. Davison-Pullan advised that the restorative justice team were often involved in dealing with the young person and if they did not engage with them

then they could go back to the more conventional route of appearing before the court, etc.

With regards to the programmes running to help in tackling childhood obesity, Councillor Williams raised concerns on behalf of parents who had received letters regarding their child's weight and had been affronted by the language used within them. She commented that if the purpose was to engage with families then the wording of the letters needed to be addressed and asked who wrote them and if Members could have some input.

Ms. Scanlon advised that this issue had been raised previously and that some letters had been delayed in being sent to parents to address concerns over their content. She also informed Members that the letters were distributed from the Health Authority but the Council could have some input into them.

Mr. Moore commented that in his role as Executive Director he did jointly sign the initial letter parents received asking them to be involved with the Director of Public Health and he would be happy to take the Members concerns and comments back directly. He explained that there was a balance to be struck to ensure that the letter was clear about the challenge faced but should be worded to help parents understand how they can deal with any issues positively as using the wrong language and context could just disengage people further.

The Chairman referred to page 62 of the report and the percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals achieving 5A\*-C at GCSE level and asked how these fit with the results that had just been discussed earlier in the agenda, which Mr. Foster advised were provisional at present. He explained that the final results would be confirmed in the autumn term and the Chairman asked that they be circulated to the Committee as they would be helpful for them to have.

The Chairman also referred to the number of excluded pupils and asked what support was given to the school and was advised that there was a three tiered support system in place. The first tier was around early intervention with the pupil to keep them in school where possible. The second tier was a 12 week turnaround programme and the third tier was crisis management, targeting those schools where exclusions were higher than normal to ensure both tiers one and two were being carried out efficiently and effectively as possible. Mr. Foster advised that the importance was laid on getting involved with pupils with unruly behaviour as soon as possible as it was easier to nurture a year 1 pupil than it was to try and deal with a pupil at years 10 or 11.

The Chairman having thanked the Officers for their report, it was:-

6. RESOLVED that the continued good progress made by the Council and the Sunderland Partnership and the areas that require further development to ensure performance is actively managed be received and noted.

## **Children and Young People's Plan Annual Report 2010-2011**

The Executive Director of Children's Services submitted a report for urgent business in accordance with Section 100 (B) of the Local Government Act 1972 (copy circulated) which sought Members advice and consideration on a report considered by Cabinet on 7 September, 2011 on the Children and Young People's Plan Annual Report 2010/11.

(for copy report – see original minutes).

Ms. Beverley Scanlon, Head of Commissioning and Change Management presented the report advising that it outlined the progress and performance against the Children and Young People's Delivery Plan 2011-2013, advising that Members views would contribute to the consultation process and be report back to Cabinet at its meeting 5 October, 2011 and then subsequently to Council.

The Chairman asked that Members forward any comments they had to the Scrutiny Officer by Friday, 16<sup>th</sup> September, 2011, who would then coordinate a detailed response to Cabinet, and it was:-

7. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted and Members coordinated response on the Children and Young People's Plan Annual Report 2010-2011 be submitted to Cabinet.

## **Work Programme 2011-12**

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) appending the current work programme for the Committee's information.

(for copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Williams asked that a report be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee on School Admissions, and it was:-

8. RESOLVED that the information contained within the work programme be received and noted and reports be added, with the agreement of the Chairman, as discussed during the meeting.

## **Forward Plan – Key Decisions for the Period 1<sup>st</sup> September, 2011 to 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2011**

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) to provide Members with an opportunity to consider the Executive's Forward Plan for the period 1<sup>st</sup> September, 2011 – 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2011.

(for copy report – see original minutes).

Mr. Cummings, Scrutiny Officer, having presented the report, it was:-

9. RESOLVED that the Executive's Forward Plan for the period 1<sup>st</sup> September, 2011 to 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2011 be received and noted.

The Chairman then closed the meeting having thanked Members and Officers for their attendance.

(Signed) P. STEWART,  
Chairman.